

VZCZCXRO1667
PP RUEHIK
DE RUEHRL #1471/01 3221544
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 181544Z NOV 09
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5832
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDRUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 001471

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [EUN](#) [GM](#)

SUBJECT: GERMANY AND BUNDESWEHR TRANSFORMATION: COMMITTED
TO AN EXPEDITIONARY POSTURE BUT STRUGGLING WITH KEY
DEFICIENCIES

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¶1. (U) SUMMARY. DefMin Karl-Theodor zu Guttenberg in his first speech to the new Bundestag on November 10 emphasized that the Bundeswehr must be "sleeker, even more efficient, and even more focused on out-of-area operations," indicating that the new MOD remains committed to developing a more mobile and expeditionary force. However, the switch from a defensive military to an expeditionary force already has been in planning since 2004 when Bundeswehr Inspector General Schneiderhan kicked off Bundeswehr transformation. The specific priorities highlighted in the 2006 White Book (strategic air-lift, reconnaissance, and attention to front line equipment and communications) remain unachieved, indicating that the new defense minister has a long road ahead of him. END SUMMARY.

CHALLENGES TO A MODERN BUNDESWEHR

¶2. (SBU) Unnoticed by the German public, Bundeswehr transformation entered its sixth year in 2009. While DefMin Jung mainly executed reforms that were initiated by his predecessors, DefMin zu Guttenberg will have to refine the course of the Bundeswehr's transformation. Multiple contacts identify Germany's lack of strategic air lift as the biggest limitation on the Bundeswehr and its increased participation in deployments. To meet this need in the short term, the Bundeswehr in 2004 joined the Strategic Air Lift Interim Solution (SALIS) project. The SALIS project charters six Russian and Ukrainian Antonov An-124-100 transport aircraft to transport equipment to out-of-area deployments, including Afghanistan. Although envisioned as a stop-gap solution, the SALIS project remains in use due to delays in delivery of the new A400M strategic transport aircraft. Without further delays, delivery should occur in 2012.

¶3. (SBU) The lack of reconnaissance capabilities also restricts the Bundeswehr's ability to function during deployments. This lack is especially apparent in Afghanistan, according to Colonel Olaf von Roeder, Deputy Head of the Bundeswehr Transformation Center. However, the Bundeswehr is addressing the reconnaissance gap through recent procurements. Since 2000, the Bundeswehr has operated the LUNA drone, a light weight, medium-range reconnaissance system, which was brought to Afghanistan in 2005. Earlier this year, the Bundeswehr also deployed to Afghanistan a new mini-UAV, the KZO (Kleinfluggert Ziel Ortung), which allows for precise target acquisition. On October 29, the MOD announced that the Bundeswehr's Tornado reconnaissance aircraft now have the capability to provide live, "real time" imagery by replacing the old photo film system with an electronic version.

¶4. (SBU) The lack of defensive armor on some units and the

inability to operate in severe climates also limits Bundeswehr effectiveness in deployments such as Afghanistan. Many German helicopters do not have any defensive armor, according to Von Roeder, and the helicopters are ill-suited for the Afghan climate. According to Sascha Lange of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), German helicopters, engines are not designed to operate in hot weather, high altitudes, and dusty environments. Of the 80 CH-53s that Germany has in its inventory, only 22 have been upgraded to the more advanced GS version (equipped with armor and electronic warfare) with an additional six helicopters to be similarly upgraded next year. Only by 2014 will an additional 40 CH-53s be upgraded to the GA version, with improved avionics but no additional armor. The Bundeswehr has ordered 80 armored Tiger helicopters from EADS Eurocopter, but they will be equipped with the PARS-3 anti-tank missile system, which makes them less than ideal for the counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan. Moreover, the Tiger's delivery has been delayed an indeterminate amount of time due to problems with the accompanying radar.

¶5. (SBU) The Bundeswehr recognizes the problems surrounding communications, but still lacks a unified system for the various services. Currently, the Army's communication system cannot be integrated with the communication systems of other military branches. Additionally, conscription may serve as an growing obstacle to Bundeswehr transformation, given that conscripted soldiers are not allowed to be deployed for missions abroad, unless they volunteer to do so.

Although the MOD's official line is that there is "no problem" squaring the older system of conscription with Bundeswehr transformation, some Bundeswehr officers openly argue that moving to an all-volunteer force would give Germany a much more efficient and effective military

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structure and enable it to deploy units abroad much more easily, in contrast to the current system of putting together ad hoc forces to serve on international missions. Moreover, the new coalition government's pledge to decrease mandatory service from nine months to just six calls into question whether a conscripted soldier will be able to perform any meaningful military tasks during the mandatory service period.

LOOKING AHEAD

¶6. (SBU) The financial crisis likely will impact the MOD budget in the near future. Many experts expect the overall federal budget, and the defense budget in particular, to be affected by the current budget deficit of 86 billion euros. While it remains unclear whether this would be all covered by spending cuts, the MOD's 31 billion Euro budget -- Germany's third largest budget item -- is a likely to be trimmed or at least face a stagnant future. Germany already spends just 1.3 percent of its GDP on defense, far below the NATO goal of 2 percent. The unlikelihood of budget increases may cause the new defense minister to view the Bundeswehr's current configuration of manpower and equipment as unsustainable, forcing a significant trimming of the military's structure, according to SWP analyst Lange. Moreover, the MOD already has allocated the procurement budget until 2015 on large ticket items like the Puma infantry fighting vehicle, the Boxer armored transport vehicle, and the A400M, limiting future discretion in procurement. On top of that, Lange reports that the Bundeswehr remains behind schedule in its attempt to reduce its civilian work force to 75,000 employees by 2010.

¶7. (SBU) The Bundeswehr still faces bureaucratic inefficiencies, which have become more apparent following the Balkan and Afghan deployments. The Afghanistan experience especially, according to Von Roeder, has shown that the Bundeswehr's distinction among stabilization forces (70,000), support (147,500) and combat forces (35,000) is no

longer applicable. This argument likely will continue to have traction with the new government as the CDU/CSU already identifies the combat-support distinction as a potentially outdated concept. Former CDU/CSU Defense Policy Spokesman Bernd Siebert expects the new government to reassess which capabilities/services the Bundeswehr actually needs and whether some services could be provided in a better way by other government agencies or "non-state partners."

MURPHY